his horse. It was an open carriage and without saying any more the stranger helped Luella into it.

She thought as he did so that perhaps she was making a mistake. She was talking and listening to a strange man to whom she had not been introduced. At the same time she felt there was no reason why she should not at least hear his suggestion, although it might be difficult to stay on in Italy, however attractive his proposition.

Then she remembered the uncertainty of what she might find in England. She told herself that it could do no harm to hear what this gentleman, for he was undoubtedly that, had to say. After all, if she was not interested, she could still go to the British Embassy.

The gentleman gave the address to the coachman and, as he drove off, he said: "Now this is more comfortable than walking, and suppose we introduce ourselves? My name is Vittorio Vecchio."

"You already know, Signor,. that my name is Hanley," Luella said, "and I was given the Italian Christian name of Luella because I was born in Italy."

"A very charming name for a very charming lady," Signor Vecchio said, "and I am sure, Miss Hanley, that your distinguished father would advise you to listen to what I have to suggest."

Luella thought it was kind of the Signor to talk of her father in such a way.

They drove on in silence. As the Signor had said, not far from the Cathedral there was an impressive-looking house. The carriage pulled up and Signor Vecchio paid the cabman. They walked up to the

house, but to Luella's surprise he did not knock on the front door. Instead he led her down a narrow passageway at the side of the house.

He stopped at another door which he opened with a latch-key. "I am taking you to my office," he said, "because there we shall be undisturbed and it is easier to talk business."

He smiled as he spoke as if he thought 'business' was a strange word to connect with Luella.

His office consisted of a small room with a desk. At the same time there were several comfortable armchairs. On one wall was a large mirror. On another were some paintings which reminded Luella of those she had seen in Paris painted by those who were known as the 'Impressionists'.

Signor Vecchio indicated a chair which had its back to them. "Now what I am sure you would like, and what I would like myself, is a cup of coffee – unless of course, you prefer a different sort of drink?"

Quite suddenly, for no apparent reason, Luella became frightened. She wondered why she had been stupid enough to come here with this stranger. She wanted to leave immediately, but she was not certain how she could do so. It was not just the atmosphere of the room. It was the smile on Signor Vecchio's face. It made him appear different from the fatherly figure who had spoken to her outside the Cathedral. Perhaps it was because he had taken off his hat. Whatever it was, he no longer seemed like the kindly elderly gentleman he had appeared to be on their way here.

"No, no," she said quickly. "It is very kind of you, but I want nothing. Tell me what you have